

GUIDELINES FOR ADMINISTRATION OF THE DEMOCRACY COMMISSION SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

The Democracy Commission Small Grants Program was initiated in 1994 as a flexible mechanism to enable embassies to support initiatives that contribute to more open and competitive political and economic systems and the protection of human rights. The following are program guidelines:

A. Program Summary

1. The implementing body at each mission is the Democracy Commission, which is under the authority of the Ambassador and includes members of the Country Team, and other representatives as determined by each individual mission.
2. The Ambassador or DCM is responsible for approving all grant recommendations made by each post. The Ambassador or DCM may choose whether to participate in Commission meetings or review and approve their recommendations.
3. Grants are aimed primarily at indigenous NGOs and independent media. Grants are awarded on the basis of a competition or upon determination of need by the Commission.
4. Funds are disbursed by the Public Affairs Officer or other public diplomacy grants officer.

B. Proposal Guidelines

Eligibility:

1. The Commission may award grants of up to \$24,000 primarily to indigenous non-profit organizations and independent media. Most awards will be smaller.
2. American or other donor country organizations and individuals are not eligible for grants under this program. Participation of organizations from other SEE or Eurasian countries may be considered on a case-by-case basis to promote regional cooperation.
3. Grants to individuals should be awarded only if the individual is affiliated with an organization that can provide long-term sustainability to the initiative.
4. Grants are normally made on a one-time basis. A repeat grant to a particularly worthy organization may be issued if post determines the activity advances a clearly defined priority objective. Posts must include additional justification for a repeat grant when submitting it to Washington for technical review.

Themes:

1. Grants should support initiatives such as promotion of civil society; free flow of information (including support for independent media); transparency in government; public education and advocacy; association building; rule of law and legal reform; conflict resolution; human rights; civic education; environment; market economy; anti-trafficking and anti-corruption awareness campaigns and training; and ethnic, minority, and women's equality.
2. Grants may not be used for partisan political activity. However, public education, get-out-the-vote, election monitoring and other non-partisan election activities may be supported.
3. Grants under the market economy theme may focus on developing business associations or public education on the workings of a market economy, but should not be used to replicate technical assistance or training programs normally conducted as part of business development initiatives, unless geared toward promoting the integration of a specific, disadvantaged group in society (e.g., ethnic minorities, women, internally displaced persons, the disabled, etc.).
4. Democracy Commission grants may be used to promote non-discrimination and tolerance for disadvantaged minorities, but should not be used to promote the particular agenda of a specific group, practice, or lifestyle over any other. Close attention should be given to applications addressing tolerance and human rights (focusing on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation), HIV/AIDS, trafficking in persons, and similar issues. Before awarding any grant related to these issues, Embassy Democracy Commission staff must brief grantees on the distinction between support for human rights and our inability to advocate for a specific lifestyle or the views of any specific organization. For example, if a religious minority were persecuted in a country, it would be appropriate to provide a grant to educate people on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and how it supports religious freedom. However, the grantee must be instructed that the USG-funded project – including any graphics, publications, seminars, or other content – cannot advocate for any particular religion. As part of grant administration, Embassies should review any publications or publicity funded by the USG and alert the grantee and the Department if any are inconsistent with this policy. Grants addressing minority rights should make clear the broader local context of the human rights situation, and the human rights abuses being perpetrated against the group. (See STATE 22871-04 (02/03/04)).

Allowable Budget Items:

1. Grants should not provide for long-term infrastructure needs that are not sustainable once grant funds are depleted.
2. Salaries, overhead, equipment, and other administrative expenses are allowable only as they relate to specific project activities. Salary or honoraria should be listed according to rate of pay and percentage of time spent on program-related activities. While salary expenses are permissible for indigenous personnel, payment of honoraria and other expenses for foreign experts will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

3. Democracy Commission funds should not be used to pay for travel to the U.S. or for travel grants. Projects involving regional travel will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and must have a clear justification outlining why the travel is integral to the project.
4. Democracy Commission funds should not be used to provide direct social services to populations.
5. Democracy Commission funds should not be used for food expenses. When these costs cannot be supported otherwise they should be clearly justified and limited to a maximum of 10% of the total award amount. This includes expenses associated with individual per diems for grant-related activities. Alcohol and entertainment costs are not allowable expenses.